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### THE NEGRO AS AN ELEMENT IN COLONIAL EXPANSION

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*“It is the same all over Hayti . . . all that White energy, industry, and intelligence once initiated and carried on has, since the disappearance of the White man, and the ascendancy of the Black, practically dropped out of being.”*—HESKETH PRICHARD, September, 1900. *The Geographical Journal*.

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The Negro in America—South Africa—West Indies—As a Soldier  
—Equality with Whites

LET us speak of the negro with some measure of frankness. Forty years ago we no more thought of questioning the wickedness of slavery than the virtue of Christianity—or Republicanism. People were either slave-holders or abolitionists; not necessarily from knowledge, but from a conviction akin to that which induces members of one religious sect to suffer death rather than surrender an article of faith about which all are equally ignorant. In the seventeenth century half of the white race fought the other half over the interpretation of a few mystical words in the Bible, and from 1860 to 1865, one-half of the clergymen of the United States denounced the other half for their views regarding the capacity of the negro for liberty, if not self-government. That question was settled not by an appeal to the judgment of men competent to express an opinion, but by a long war which

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ended in the victory of the side that had most men and money. The American Civil War determined that negroes should not be held as slaves in the United States, but otherwise it left the black problem unsolved.

Among the many causes uniting in the North to suppress slavery in the South the moral one no doubt predominated. The impassioned oratory of such courageous humanitarians as Henry Ward Beecher found an answering voice throughout the more northern States where the white man respected labor, and believed that the Declaration of Independence applied to every human creature without distinction of race.

Yet the black man has no greater enemy than the enthusiastic white philanthropist, who has absorbed his ethnological knowledge from the pages of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and who ends by victimizing the African whom he desires to benefit.\* From the day when Co-

\* Negroes were the object of mob violence on the streets of New York in the summer of 1900. The Rev. William Brooks, the colored pastor of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church, in West Fifty-third street, preached a sermon before a large congregation on "The Story of the New York Riot." During the sermon the feelings of the congregation were at fever heat, and, despite the pastor's frequent admonitions to be calm, his hearers twice interrupted the sermon with vigorous applause. He said :

"I have been visiting the riot victims and making an investigation. I have a book of facts. What I say here to-night may send me before the courts, possibly to jail. In making the following charges against the police, I invite investigation :—

"Innocent men were cruelly assaulted.

"The clubbing in nearly every case was done by the police.

"We have not found a single 'tough' character among the victims maltreated, but honest, hard-working persons.

"Respectable and helpless colored women who appealed to the police for protection were cursed and threatened for their petition.

"Men and women prisoners were beaten by the police while getting in and out of the patrol, and while on the way to the police stations.

"Men were beaten in the station-houses.

"Men and women were taken from their beds in a nude condition by the police."

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lumbus brought the first African as a slave to the West Indies, down to this year, 1900, when the lynching and intimidation of negroes forms a familiar item in our newspapers, the negro has been studied from two extreme points of view, that of the professional philanthropist at home, and that of the practical planter "on the spot." The liberation of African slaves not only in the United States, but by England and Spain, in their respective colonies, was effected mainly by the priesthood, who regarded slavery as a sin in the eyes of God. Their position in the state made their opinion final on the subject of what was the view of the Almighty on this subject, and their arguments were irresistible, because they could be neither proved nor disproved. The Church view in old Spain was not far different from that entertained by the home churches to-day in England and our Northern States, that the black is inferior only so long as he remains a heathen. When, however, he assents to missionary persuasion, he is transformed not merely into a soul precious to the Almighty, but into a political creature fit to vote by the side of the white man.

The Boer of South Africa, who knows the negro better than most of us, who is not only a devout Bible Christian, but an ardent lover of liberty, has never admitted into his political creed the proposition that all men are, ever have been, or ever can be, equal. The Boer has fought his way through Africa when the odds were ten to one in favor of the Kaffir; he has experienced every form of native treachery, cowardice, and cruelty; he has founded prosperous farms and villages in a country once devastated by blood-thirsty chiefs,

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and has converted black savages into domestic servants.

On the occasion of my visit to South Africa immediately after the Jameson Raid (1896), I found a pretty general condemnation of missionaries among English as well as Boer Afrikanders, on political rather than religious grounds. The white settlers of all nationalities regarded it as injudicious that the Christian religion should be perpetually dangled before the eyes of the black native as a prize by means of which he was to become, in some mysterious way, the equal of the white man. Missionary teaching was far from inoculating the Kaffir with the meekness of Our Saviour; on the contrary, employers of labor regarded the raw savage as a better man for their purposes than the one who had learned just enough of our religion to understand the Declaration of Independence.

No nation has expended more energy and money in effects to elevate the negro than the United States. Perhaps it would be more just to speak of the Anglo-Saxon nation in one breath, for the moral sentiment on this subject is not very different, whether we refer to London or New York, Chicago or Manchester.\* The same England that carried the first cargo of slaves to Virginia was the first nation to abolish slavery in her own colonies. In America, the churches of the North, with the assistance of rich philanthropists, have founded schools for negroes, and every college of the

\*In 1833 England voted £20,000,000 to indemnify slave-owners. The slave-trade had been abolished by England in 1807, by the United States in 1808. In the great Civil War General Sherman claimed to have destroyed in his raids more property than was represented by the whole slave indemnity voted by England in 1833.

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country practically opens its doors to the African race. Even West Point must give an officer's commission to the black boy who passes her examinations. The first negro who graduated at West Point was subsequently expelled from the army for stealing money of the soldiers. One or two have graduated since, but their career of usefulness is circumscribed, not because the Government desires to discourage them, but for the more potent reason that no soldier will follow them into battle, or treat them as superiors. In no part of the world where the negro has been colonized, does he show so high a degree of domesticity and capacity for civilization as in the United States, where for three hundred years he has been in daily contact with a high type of white manhood. From the very outset he adopted the white man's dress, language, and religion. So long as the white man asserted his ascendancy, lived on his plantation, and looked after his negroes, they gave him not merely their labor, but the tribute of a loyalty touching in its childish completeness. The negro adopted not merely the name of his master, but assumed among his fellows the relative rank which that master held among neighboring planters. The keynote to the negro's character is his inherited tribal instinct. He does not care for political institutions in general—his whole being yearns for a chief, a leader, a master. It was my fortune shortly after the Civil War to visit some relatives who owned large plantations in Maryland. As I had been brought up in New England, I assumed, of course, that when the slaves were emancipated they would all promptly run away to the North, or, if they stayed, would band together in hos-

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tile league against their old masters. But my young preconceptions were violently jarred when in this northernmost of the slave States I discovered that the negroes not only had not run away, but, on the contrary, did not appreciate the political rights that had been so suddenly thrust upon them.

When news of President Lincoln's proclamation arrived, my kinsman, who was an arch "rebel," went out to his negro cabins and announced the fact to his blacks. "Now, boys—you're all free—go along—I don't want you any more—get out!"

But they laughed in his face—they knew him for a man of wit and humor. They thought this another of his jokes.

Not only did they not leave, but to this day they or their descendants are on the place, and cannot yet understand why so much blood and treasure should have been wasted down South to upset things that needed only a little modifying to make them satisfactory.

What I found among the plantations of Maryland, I also found further south in every State from Virginia to Texas—the same black man holding for his master the same feudal feeling that characterizes the Kaffir of South Africa.

This feeling makes the negro one of the best of soldiers, at least in the opinion of his white officers. During the Spanish War there was but one voice in the matter, the voice of praise for the black man as a soldier in the ranks. He needs the constant example and leadership of the white officer, but under him he will do anything that can be reasonably demanded. In

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the butchery that marked the progress up San Juan Hill the negro regiments under West Point captains showed steadiness and courage. Since that war the papers have been so busy with the praises of "political" war heroes, that the Regulars have been ignored. Indeed, though the war is now two years ended, I can scarcely recall the mention of any West Point graduates—they are buried under a mass of politicians and newspaper correspondents.

The negro makes a good soldier because he possesses the cardinal virtue of the private in the ranks—loyalty to the person of his chief. The negro soldier cares not a snap for the red tape of the War Office—the captain is his code. If he does wrong, he would rather take a flogging from his captain than have a court-martial and be acquitted. When the captain is on furlough, the negro company is like a family without a head. I have a friend who left his black regiment in Texas and came to New York on furlough to visit his family. Not many days after his arrival, there appeared at his door one of his troop, who announced that he had come to stay, "He belonged to Massa John's troop!"

That was quite enough in his eyes—and that of the family. This black trooper stayed there, made himself useful in the kitchen, bragged in the servants' hall about the bravery of his chief, and, when the captain's leave was up, the black man also went away.

The moving forces of this world cannot be put into the scales and weighed. Great wars have been waged under the inspiration of emotions without any more foundation than fairy stories. Loyalty, respect for parents, patriotism, religion—these are the forces that

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move the world, not factory-wheels and banking concerns. The negro is a mighty force, and he can be led by a thread in the hands of the man that knows him. To-day this force is wasted to a large extent; the negro is thrown out into the street; his leaders have abandoned him; he is in America exposed to the capricious discipline of the white mob.\*

What I have said of the negro as an American soldier is no less true of him in the British army. In the West Indies, British Guiana, and South Africa, I have seen excellent negro troops, and the British officers in command have spoken to me of their men with the same affection as have West Pointers. It is under discipline that the negro shows to the best advantage—discipline of a great plantation, of a vast summer hotel, of a railway sleeping-car service, but chief of all, the army; for military discipline suits the negro to an exceptional extent. He loves the pomp and circumstance of it; the solemn parade, the music, the swagger, and the serving of a chief.

In South Africa black troops were not used to any large extent by the British, unless for mounted police work. But those that I did see in Natal and among the Basuto, were on a par with the best of the United States or the West Indies. The English officers spoke of them in the same affectionate manner, and for the same reasons.

While I was at Maseru polo was in progress, and, as there happened to be vacancies among the white officers, black troopers were called upon to fill their

\* In 1899 there were eighty-four negro lynchings recorded. For many years lynchings in the United States have averaged between one and two hundred annually, the large majority being negroes.



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places, that the play might not be spoiled. These were men born in savagery, bred up to steal and murder—who had never worn more dress than a snuff spoon through the ear up to the time of England's taking charge of them. And yet here they were in the rough and tumble of a polo game, playing with their conquerors as children with their parents, at least on the field of sport.

The negroes of Basutoland felt proud when allowed to play with the white chiefs. It was beautiful to watch the glow of pride on the faces of these natives when called upon in a manner so flattering to their vanity.

In my journey through Basutoland the British Governor gave me as guide, protector, interpreter, and escort, a member of his military force, who wore the British uniform and cocked his forage cap over his ear in a manner quite as "knowing" as Tommy Atkins in Hyde Park. We went to Taba Basio to see Masupa, the son of Moshesh, who in his day was the most powerful chief in South Africa.

Our escort was of the family of Moshesh and received semi-royal honors from the natives whom we met on the way. But the honors he paid to his own native King were scant compared to those which he delighted in offering to the white man. His black majesty, King Masupa, was slightly drunk when I had the honor of a presentation to him. He was surrounded by his warriors, and talked very freely of the pleasure he would have in fighting against the Boers! Cheap talk this! for the Boers had thrashed the Basuto on many occasions, and all the power these blacks now

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have is what is loaned to them by British prestige. When Masupa was told that I wished to carry away a picture of him, he leaped up, ran to his hut, and disappeared. I thought this very strange. Perhaps he was angry—perhaps he was preparing an ambush for me! Thinking it well to be certain on such a point, I followed and found him rummaging in a big chest among a lot of cast-off clothing. There were coats that had been discarded by ship's stewards, consuls, or British generals; it mattered little to Masupa, so long as some brass buttons or bits of gold lace were left. His chiefs held up first one coat and then another. Finally he settled upon one that might have been worn by a Portuguese Admiral—the cloth could hardly be seen for the amount of faded gold lace upon it. First, however, he put on a shabby red flannel shirt to which he sought to add a paper collar. The studs bothered him very much—they were even more troublesome to his suite. One chief after another tried his fingers at these strange and elusive articles—but the result was torture to the King. The room had only the light from a small door, and was nearly dark. The small space was crowded with very greasy, naked chiefs who tried their hands and fingers ineffectually at getting the collar properly adjusted to the neck of their King. They pinched his skin until it bled. The chief never flinched. His Royal honor was at stake. They tore collar after collar, and the day was drawing to its close. At last, after much grunting, royalty issued from that dirty hovel—every inch a king, as African kings go, dressed in the cast-off clothing of Europeans, with a stovepipe hat on his head, and in his right hand

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the emblem of his savagery, the Kaffir knob-kirrie or war club.

That is an epitome of the African when left to his own devices. There was the King, and at my side was the black private in a British cavalry troop. That private was the superior of his King in every essential. Masupa is allowed to reign because for the moment he has his uses!

And here we have a lesson in colonial administration. Basutoland, containing fighting negroes which are acknowledged as the best in Africa—some 250,000 in number—is governed by a half dozen Englishmen who have not even a body-guard of white troops to protect them in case of a riot.

This country is far away from railways and newspapers; at the time of my visit there were no British garrisons within hundreds of miles; the Governor and his wife were completely isolated; yet they assured me they felt themselves as secure, day and night, as though in lodgings on Piccadilly.

The Basuto honor Sir Godfrey Lagden because in their eyes he represents justice, courage, and the great far-away white Queen whom their imagination endows with supernatural powers. If a Basuto chief misbehaves, the white Governor has no need to bring in white soldiers for the sake of punishing the offender. It is enough for him to call a council of chiefs to lay the matter before them. By tact he secures their support, and they help him to punish the malefactor in a manner which the natives themselves recognize as suitable.

No one dreams, in Basutoland, of a general mas-

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sacre of whites by blacks—least of all of a massacre of English. Nor have the American negroes shown a disposition, even in their days of slavery, to rise and attack the whites. They have been often sorely provoked, and now and then there has been rioting, but in general, wherever negroes have shown hostility to white man's rule it has sprung from good reasons—usually cruelty linked with incapacity.

Another black king whom I had the pleasure of knowing was Ja Ja, who had been transferred from the African West Coast to St. Vincent in the West Indies in punishment for some raiding he had done in his native country. Ja Ja had his wife with him, and lived in a very comfortable bungalow looking out over the Caribbean Sea. He had a negro servant to wait on him, and the British Government allowed him a handsome salary. He lived in comfort far surpassing that of his royal cousin Masupa. Ja Ja told me his tale—assured me of his innocence—and begged me to intercede with the United States Government to have him reinstated in Africa. His intellectual calibre was that of the average sleeping-car porter, and it was hard to determine which was the more grotesque, his playing the king in Africa or his royal pretensions in St. Vincent.

I cannot claim large acquaintance with African royalty. Masupa and Ja Ja, and a few Swazi and Maloboks whom I met casually, close my list. These few were all good specimens of physical manhood—the best of the blacks. What can we, in all fairness, predicate of a race among whom these are types of leadership? We keep repeating to ourselves that the black

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man is equal to the white—that he only lacks opportunity—that he has not yet had time to develop, etc. But is it fair to ask, “How much time must we give him? What opportunities does he yet lack?”

My experience is probably that of most Americans. At the school where I fitted for college (the Academy of Norwich, Conn.) there was a negro girl in the same class. She dressed as well as the others, and received the same attention from the teachers. I never heard of any slight put upon her; on the contrary, she was an object of great interest to all the town, for the public sentiment of the place was strongly in favor of proving the superior capacity of the negro. At Yale University was also a negro student in my year. I could discover no forces at work calculated to discourage him from aspiring to the highest professional positions at the bar or in literature, in the pulpit or any other of the liberal walks of life. On the contrary, if a negro happened to rise a small bit above the common level, there was a disposition to make much of him, to show him off as proof of what the race could do.

We have a knowledge of the African as far back as we have a knowledge of any human race, and from the earliest historical times to this day, from Herodotus to Uncle Remus, we find the same helpless darky—the delight of children, inconsequent, shiftless, melodious, loyal, fond of color, delighting in sunshine, and shy of consecutive labor.

Northern educators who have honestly striven to see the best of the negro, and professors at colleges, including West Point, have assured me that the capacity of the negro for intellectual work is very limited; that

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they proceed rapidly in the early stages, when memory, or rather mimicry, counts for much. They frequently surpass white children of the same age in languages. But soon they commence to hesitate in their progress; their minds become clouded; mathematical reasoning stops them; the white children then gain rapidly, and, by the age of seventeen, the negro is left hopelessly behind.

No one doubts that negroes can make a passable show as preachers, lawyers, doctors, editors, poets, and such. Judging by the feeble showing of some of our white acquaintances in these professions, we almost feel inclined to reach a helping hand to the arboreal portion of the animal kingdom. But when the black man has done his best in the intellectual walks of life, he has after all only reached the level of an inferior white man.

Darwinism is the fashion of the day, but it does not show us that in the last 10,000 years the black man or the white has changed one iota of his physical or intellectual capacity. Nations have come forward; others have declined, according to laws connected with morals and political economy; but the highest type of our day, and the highest type of any previous generation, do not differ sufficiently for us to draw the conclusion that mankind has varied more than is involved in one man having the use of a telephone and a hundred-ton gun, against the other who had but a javelin and a canoe paddle. This view may be wrong, but it is at least founded on better legal evidence than the one that accuses my ancestor of being an ape.

Spain has solved much of her negro question by intermarriage with Africans. The Frenchman in Mar-

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tinique and Guadelupe has also produced a bountiful bastard breed. The Anglo-Saxon and the Boer of South Africa are the only peoples that have kept their blood untainted,—and this is one secret of their power over native races.

In Cuba we have accepted responsibility for more negroes, in addition to the ten million or so in our own country, and the world is interested to see with what success we shall meet this new burden.

Our first duty is to recognize the truth, that the negro is not the equal of the white man.

Our former slave States have been compelled by military force to subscribe to a monstrous lie as the price of political existence; and the result has been that in more than one of our black States the law is nullified, and young men are demoralized by seeing the law daily set aside by respectable white people. Such action is full of danger for the future. It needs scant knowledge to point out that the generation which treats with contempt one law, may, in the next generation, be satisfied with no law at all. A republic that has not respect for the law is in danger; for there is nothing between us and the mob if we have shaken the general confidence in legal remedies.

It is therefore our duty to revise the laws which determine the present status of the negro. This country was founded as a white man's country—not merely Illinois and New York, but Louisiana and Missouri as well. It is our duty to regard the negro not merely from the stand-point of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," but from a broad study of him in the past four hundred years—in Africa, in the West Indies, and in the United States.

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We need legislation that will obviate much of the brutality and the lynching that now disgrace certain sections of our country. We have not been successful in the governing of inferior races, because we have pretended that they were our equals. It will appear from an impartial study of the subject that the negroes of this country are, in part, reverting to their original savage state—to devil worship. This has taken place in Hayti, and other parts of the West Indies, and shows us that the negro takes on the outward forms of the white man's religion for so long as the influence of the dominating race is upon him: but as soon as that support is withdrawn he lapses back to the more congenial rites of his ancestors.

Livingstone, the great missionary, tells us that in descending the Zambesi he came upon negro kraals in regions that had been occupied by Portuguese missionaries two or three centuries previously. These blacks could make the sign of the cross; and that was all that remained of the mission work. With the departure of the white priest, the white man's religion had gone also, and to-day the Kaffirs of that neighborhood are as savage in their rites as any others. At least, so I have been assured by Dr. Carl Peters, who was recently there.

Our law should recognize the negroes as minors, as wards of the nation. No negro should be allowed to mortgage his property or to contract debt beyond a very small amount. Every opportunity should be open to him for education, but the franchise should not be granted to him, or anyone else, unless he can prove a certain amount of property. Indeed it is hard



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for me to understand the justice of permitting the man who has nothing, to vote away the earnings of the man who has. I should as soon invite the longshoremen to elect our naval officers; or select the presidents of our colleges from unsuccessful Freshmen. The business of government is very largely that of raising money by taxation and spending it for the good of the community. The man who has earned money is more likely to spend it wisely than the tramp, or the man who does not care to work for the future.

Far be it from me to wish a re-establishment of slavery to its former extent. But to-day the so-called free African is no less a slave than he was fifty years ago. He is a slave to the weaknesses that make him at present the lowest thing in the scale of American citizenship. He does not now fear the flogging of the overseer, but he is the slave of the money-lender; the slave of the corner grocer; the slave of the man who advances him whiskey and gives him long credit. The Shylock fraternity has swarmed down over the South since the close of the Civil War and exploited the small negro proprietor much as it has the peasantry of Russia, Roumania, and Hungary. Their methods are the same the world over—they first open a shop where they supply groceries and whiskey at lower rates than any honest competitor can afford. Then they coax the negroes to postpone the day of settlement, an easy matter among a race of big children. Then they sell them various other things—anything, in fact, from a sham diamond ring to a mule—always assuring the credulous blacks that they may pay at any time.

Then comes a bad crop—a sudden scarcity of money

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—a fall in values—a time when the negro is in particular distress. Then is the opportunity for which Shylock has long been waiting. He presents his *little bill!* The happy-go-lucky, shiftless black man, of course cannot pay it, and finds himself facing bankruptcy. Shylock draws a long face and says he must have money at once—or be ruined; and the upshot is that the negro deeds over all his little property to his friend the money-lender and takes in return a mortgage, in which he promises to pay annually a large amount of money. In order to make that sure he promises his usurious friend that he will never buy his supplies from any other place, and, moreover, that all the cotton or tobacco he may raise in the year shall be sent to him, and only to him, to be sold on commission! Thus, under legal forms, the money-lender of another race enters, takes the place of the white planter, and puts upon the black man a slavery as complete as was ever devised in the days of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”